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THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ESTONIA AND LATVIA

Letter dated 1 December 1992 from the Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Estonia to the United Nations addressed to
the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter dated 27 November 1992 from Mr. Mart Laar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia, regarding the human rights situation in Estonia.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the Prime Minister's letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 149.

(Signed) Ernst JAAKSON
Ambassador

Annex

LETTER DATED 27 NOVEMBER 1992 FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to inform you that on 3 November 1992 President Lennart Meri established the Estonian Institute for Human Rights. The purpose of the Institute is to monitor human rights in Estonia and to ensure the representation of the rights of national minorities in our legislation, and also to disseminate factual information regarding the rights of national minorities and aliens in Estonia. Members of the governing board of the Human Rights Institute are to be invited from amongst internationally recognized experts in Estonia as well as abroad.

I understand that President Yeltsin of the Russian Federation has recently written to you with the request that you "take all measures within the United Nations, the Security Council and the General Assembly to induce the Baltic States to discharge fully and in good faith the commitments they have undertaken under bilateral and international agreements in the area of human rights and freedoms" (A/47/247). I further understand that, after intensive negotiations, at the 68th plenary meeting of the forty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided to allocate the following item to the Third Committee: "The situation of human rights in Estonia and Latvia (item 149)."

President Yeltsin also wrote to our President, and on 12 November 1992 President Meri responded to President Yeltsin's concerns as follows:

"In your letter you touched upon another issue that is also close to my heart, namely the guaranteeing of the human rights of the Russian-speaking population of Estonia. I can assure you that already on the first day of assuming office, I considered it self-evident to turn to the Russian-speaking population a hand outstretched in friendship and to promise to them that the President of Estonia will treat all people living in Estonia fairly. To ensure that words are not divorced from deeds, I have established the Institute for Human Rights. I consider it a matter of the honour of the Republic of Estonia that all norms of human rights are observed with respect to all people living in Estonia, regardless of their nationality, language, religion or beliefs. On its own initiative, the Government of Estonia has invited here an expert commission from the CSCE Bureau of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to familiarize themselves with the state of human rights in Estonia. Other international commissions have been invited as well. Estonia and the Russian Federation last week at the CSCE CSO meeting in Prague both supported Sweden's initiative to send a team of observers for a longer period of time to investigate the state of affairs in north-east Estonia. We are ready to discuss human rights guarantees in Estonia in any and all forums, including the forty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly, as proposed by the Russian Federation."

Your Excellency, given the continued level of mutual concern felt by both of us on this serious issue, I should be grateful if you would use your good offices with the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights to dispatch a fact-finding mission to Estonia by United Nations human rights experts as expeditiously as possible so that this matter can be put to rest as soon as possible.

(Signed) Mart LAAR
